

## FROM THE MISSIONARY FIELDS.

In the Turkish Mission.

Lamsoun, on the Black Sea,  
Aug. 4th, 1893.

It is now nearly three months since I left Haifa for a trip to Slives and other places. Since then I have traveled more than 800 miles, mostly by land, partly on horseback, partly in a wagon. Traveling in some parts of Turkey is quite easy, in others quite hard and difficult. In Syria and Palestine one can acquire a spring wagon at reasonable figures, and for horses, saddles moderately good can be had. But after one leaves the Arabic speaking line in Syria and enters into the Turkish speaking part of Syria (North Syria) and then proceeds farther north, the country becomes more forbidden and its people more coarse and uncivilized, until one arrives so far north that the European influence from the Black Sea trade can be felt; then there is a laxity of strictness and a milder and more advanced feeling prevails.

The roads in Syria are far better than those upon Asia Minor. Those in Syria are often strictly first class; made of the best of material and in good style, making travel easy. In Turkey proper the state roads, which are few and far between, are poorly constructed, but at a great expense. Some crank engineer has here and there been at work and in the place of economizing labor and means, it can plainly be seen that he has had some pet theory in his head which by executing he has imagined himself great and accomplished.

The road bed in the north is of the roughest kind. Large cobble stones and rocks as large as a man's head are laid in pave fashion or in the old, old country style so that even at best the wagon is on a continuous bump, bump all the time. But as can easily be understood, the road will not remain as built, for as soon as it becomes wet the rocks move out of their place and they may be seen in any other place but where they were intended to lay. "The roads are horrible," said a colonel, a traveling companion. "When I get to Swas I shall complain to the Pasha." Well, he needed to, he was not slow in condemning the government from top to bottom, still he was going to Constantinople to seek an appointment as a mutesarif, a governor of a province. He had taken to drinking and he said his salary allowed as an editor was insufficient. He was somewhat educated but he was still a Turk.

But road building is a curse to the people. It is forced upon them; they do not want roads. In many places they destroy the bridges and otherwise blockade travel. In one place crossing a very dangerous river the government had put in a bridge in advance of the regular building of the road. This the Kurds did not want though they needed it every time they went to town. The bridge was destroyed for no other apparent cause than that the people on one side of the river did not want the people on the other side to bring their sheep over there to graze. So to prevent it they destroyed the bridge.

The business part of the people complain that a road tax of about fifty cents per man is levied and that the money is not honestly spent. They, of course, would like to see the country built up but as there is no settled policy of improvement in Turkey, improvements can only be done by some wise and energetic governor, which happens now and

then to receive an appointment. The policy of the government is called plunder by any and all except by themselves. No one can have much of anything unless he knows enough to keep on the right side of some leading pasha. When he can all of a sudden become wealthy and just as suddenly lose it all if he is unfortunate enough to fall into disfavor.

In paying their taxes people are driven to desperation. If they wish to be honest they are followed up from one thing to another with a new tax or a fine for this cause or that, so that the man feels he will do nothing save that which he is compelled to do. Few men think of paying their taxes, no matter how small, unless forced. They will often close up their business and leave to draw out paying or to get out of it all together. It must be understood taxes are collected by officers who go to the houses or shops or villages and force taxes.

Brother Nishan Sherinian heard of the government call for a new registration of children born in later years. This was cried out on the market place, no notices being placed. Soon Brother Sherinian went to the registration office gave in the names of the males in the family and paid the tax for the children and himself. But when he wanted his receipt he was told that the taxes were two days overdue and that he would have to pay a fine of 10 piastres for each person. He refused. He said he knew of no time set and said it was enough that he came willingly to pay, while hundreds were on the list who neither reported nor paid. Many of whom were more able than he. But they insisted on their fine. They knew how to get it. At that time nothing was done, but as soon as he was home from his trip with Brother Lund's party to Jerusalem, they sent an officer and fetched him up before the authorities. He did not wish to pay, but they said: "We wish you had not paid it at all, but now that you have paid the tax you must pay the fine also, and besides, a man that can go to Jerusalem and travel three or four months, should not kick for paying a small fine of 30 piastres (about \$1.25)," they said tauntingly. Well, he paid it, as he would otherwise be locked up until he did pay it. Most of the people in the town have paid no attention to it. I asked about it, they say they have not got it. This works some times until some business of importance must be done with the government; then all back taxes are hunted up and a demand is made upon the applicant for a clean sheet before any business can be done.

Taxes vary a little in places. Where the law is justly administered, one-tenth of the crop whatsoever is collected, but in some districts one-eighth is taken. In some places the tax on the garden is more than the crop they levy to suit themselves. This is remedied in other places by levying a reasonable fee per dorrorn, and leave it to the owner whether or not he will saw and plant. All these variations are because the government has no fixed policy except to plunder and eat.

I do not believe that taxes are altogether so oppressive if levied and collected in the proper way. But they are not. When I passed through Amasia the government was selling tax collections in the villages at auction. Some sold as high as 30,000 and 40,000 piastres a piece. (22 piastres \$1.00 government standard.) These tax gatherers then

oppress the people, and those that have, are forced to pay in some way or other. The government, as a rule, will hear no complaints from the people.

For instance, a man may be unjustly taxed on his property, or even for his neighbors, and he says to the tax gatherer, This is not my property; this is my neighbors, he will say, You pay it all and collect from your neighbor, but the neighbor will not pay, so the man has the choice of having his grain left on the threshing floor, unmeasured and untithed until he pays. If he does not pay at once, then he will have to go to the tax gatherer and ask him to come, and probably have to wait for days, and his grain left out in the rain, and he himself as guard. They thresh in the field, and when done it must be tithed before it can be removed, for there is no confidence here. Until it can be tax-tithed it must be guarded, or it will be stolen, so that practically the man has no other chance than to pay what they ask and be satisfied with what they leave. This is because there is no protection and no one to appeal to. I had a long talk with the German consul to Amasia on the subject. He said they experienced no great trouble as the people had general confidence in them, and then when the law was satisfied all parties had to be. But to the natives it is not so, especially the Christians. There is not much difference, however, for if the Christians is more highly taxed he is more capable of making his living and he makes more money and can meet his obligations better. With equal chances it would not be long until the Christians would own the country. The Turk, who is made to be non-progressive and quite immovable in his ways is forced to oppress his Christian subjects and keep them from accumulating, or they would be like the Jews; they would own the country as the Jews own the world. The Turks are warriors, not business men. They can spend in pomp and parade the earnings of other people, but they cannot plan and economize. So long as they could conquer and plunder some foreign nation the home subjects were all right, but now that that is long since past, a system of home industry and home economy is needed, that they have not the slightest knowledge of. That they know nothing of political economy will be shown in another article, when the Armenian question will be discussed.

It is wonderful, however, how submissive the people are. They almost to a man blame the government for something. They know it is corrupt and rotten to the core, yet they do not speak of rebellion. They are kept in ignorance of the world and its progress and are made to believe that they have in their country about all that is worth having in this world, and that God is pleased only with Islam. They never think of lifting a hand against the government. I know of no government on earth so safe and free from sedition as is this government. If they were not interfered with by the other nations, they would last a long time at home, as the people are satisfied with a little bread and leave to live. It is the Christians who rebel. They, of course, feel the yoke, as they are not of the faith with the rulers. And were they, the Christians, not disturbed by outside influences, they would last a long time yet, as they have lasted a long time in the past.

F. F. HINTZE.

Laboring Under Difficulties.

Newark, Licking County, Ohio,  
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The Gospel of Jesus Christ is being carried from house to house but I am sorry to say many close their ears against the truth. They are seeking an easier way.